

FROM VISION TO ACTION

By City Councilor Kathy Hyzy – August 2020 issue of The Milwaukie Pilot newsletter

The first sentence of Milwaukie's Community Vision reads, "In 2040, Milwaukie is a flourishing city that is entirely equitable, delightfully livable, and completely sustainable." It goes on from there, but in these words you can hear all of the heart and ambition that went into developing the rest. The city has been working to fulfill this vision since the moment of its adoption in 2017, but now we are stepping more deeply into the work of creating an entirely equitable Milwaukie.

In order to transform Milwaukie into a truly equitable community, we must innovate and be open to new ways of doing things. While I don't know exactly how we do it, I do know that our usual approaches to big problems won't work here. Before we act, we need to listen deeply. "Nothing about us without us" is a refrain I have heard from communities of color as I've worked to better understand systemic racism and the way it affects us all. This doesn't mean we will be asking these folks to fix the problems, but rather to help those of us who are White to see the world as they experience it. Only then will we be able to make the changes that truly lead to better outcomes.

This is a tall order, but it's so essential. Milwaukie cannot flourish so long as we have residents who are treated as though their prosperity, safety, and right to be here are less important than those of others simply because their skin is a different color—or for any of the other ugly motives that fuel inequitable treatment. Although we face ongoing economic, housing, and health crises, as well as other kinds of discrimination, prioritizing the concerns of Black, indigenous and people of color, often abbreviated as BIPOC, will not detract from our work to address these problems. The data shows that Black and indigenous people struggle the most in all these arenas. When we figure out how to help these residents, we help everyone. A rising tide lifts all boats.

Near the end of August, the city will be hosting a series of dinners with BIPOC Milwaukians. As BIPOC residents of Oregon are facing the highest rates of COVID infection, we are adapting to the times to keep everyone safe by holding these dinners online. Meals will be delivered to participating homes, because we believe that breaking bread with one another, even virtually, helps foster conversation and build connections.